



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

We started the year by welcoming our new Parish Clerk, Fiona Richardson who took up her post on 3 May 2022. The Parish Office re opened two days a week, but with the requirement to contact the Clerk in advance, to arrange an appointment so that she can organise her time more efficiently. The Clerk is always available and happy to meet and assist parishioners in person.

Having a new Clerk in place gave the Council the opportunity to review all our processes. It has taken a year of change management to modernise and professionalise the way we conduct our business.

We have improved our Corporate Governance by setting up a Finance Working Group to give us more time (than at Parish Council Meetings), to analyse our budgeting and forecasting to improve decision making. The working group will officially become our Finance Committee from 1 May 2023. The Council is also reviewing all our Policies to ensure that they are still extant.

We have also improved our Information Governance and Business Resilience by moving the Council's business from stand-alone computers to cloud technology. This has taken a lot of time, effort and training for the Clerk and the Councillors. Councillors no longer need to use personal emails as we all now have Halton Parish Council (HPC) email addresses. The Cloud ensures all our information is secure and in one place, it allows us to share and work collaboratively on documents and it future proofs our organisation by creating a corporate memory.

This has been a busy year organisationally, but worthwhile and necessary. HPC needs to be in a strong and robust position, as we are preparing to grow as a Parish and take on added responsibilities when RAF Halton closes.

The Team

We have a very small team of volunteers with a very large remit, due to the closure of RAF Halton. We are supported by one part time Clerk. Our Parish Clerk is new to the world of local government she has worked hard to understand her role, bringing a fresh perspective to the Parish, and is delivering on our change agenda.

There is a separate report for the Village Hall, but we would like to say a special thank you to Mike Jimson who was the Village Hall Booking Clerk for many years. It is Mike's legacy that he created our current model of a self-funding Village Hall, by increasing and maintaining bookings to deliver a sustainable income.

We welcome Sarah Stobbs to the team, Sarah lives locally and joined us in March as our new Village Hall Bookings Clerk.

We also lost our Village Hall Caretaker Beryl Woon as she retired in June 2022. We presented Beryl with flowers and thanked her for 25 years of outstanding service to the Parish Council. Councillor Jenny Hickey volunteered to take over the role.

HPC has eleven posts, of which eight are filled by very proactive Councillors. On behalf of our Parishioners, we would like to thank them for the hours they spend protecting and enhancing our Parish, bringing our community together, and working as a team to progress our interests. It requires a big commitment from very few people, and this year has been especially tough with retraining, and learning new ways of working alongside our normal activities.

Thank You All for delivering so much for our community.

We welcome any parishioners who are willing to take up the three vacant posts and would like to support us in our work.

Community

The Halton Queen's Platinum Jubilee Festival was held on Thursday 2 June 2022 at The Halton Tennis Centre. It was organised and publicised by the Council; the event took part in two phases. In the afternoon, families enjoyed traditional fete stalls including face painting, party bus, tombola and delicious cakes. The cake stall featured a competition to guess the weight of a special jubilee cake made by Zoe Parker. Non-stop afternoon entertainment was provided by The Top Hats Theatre Company and Halton Tennis Team with court activities for juniors. The evening was attended by approximately 250 people, aimed at adults, it was opened by our MP Rob Butler, with entertainment provided by the magician Paul Megram and our local band Soundproof.

This was a hugely successful community event, attracting around 1,000 people during the daytime. Enjoyed by all the families who attended, we were delighted to welcome so many Service families (as their partners were on duty in London supporting the Jubilee celebrations). Thank You to Halton Tennis Centre for allowing us to use their facilities and for providing volunteers, thanks also to The Clubhouse for their hard work keeping up with demand for refreshments. Finally, a big thank you to the Council's Entertainment Committee and all the parishioners who volunteered and made it such a special and memorable celebration.

On 13 August 2022, the Council supported Music in Quiet Places, a concert held in St Michael and All Angels to raise money for the church tower fund. The local community came together enjoying a historic village walk delivered by Paul Waddams, followed by drinks and canapes in our beautiful churchyard and the concert inside our pretty church. 68 tickets were sold, raising £375 for the tower fund, as it was such an enjoyable evening, we decided to make it an annual village event.

Our Annual Service of Remembrance took place on 13 November 2022 in the churchyard, supported by RAF Halton. We would like to thank the 'Roberts' family who take over the village hall each year, and generously provide an amazing feast of refreshments for the Recruits and parishioners who attend.

The Pensioners Christmas Lunch was cancelled due to low take up. It was decided to use the charitable funds to trial a Warm Space Initiative in the Village Hall for parishioners. This took

place in December, however there was low take up and we established that there was no requirement to continue the service.

Highways

We obtained a grant from the Community Board to purchase a second Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS) so we now have two MVAS signs. One mains operated, in Halton Lane, one battery operated in Chestnut Ave. We have two volunteers who look after a sign each, changing batteries and downloading data, producing data reports. We would like to thank them for their invaluable support.

The mains operated sign is much easier to manage although we did have a number of issues when it was installed due to supplier errors i.e., the wi-fi aerial wasn't fitted so we couldn't download data. Data from the signs provides useful information about traffic volumes and speeds; traffic volumes have continued to grow in both locations.

Average speeds are gradually reducing and are now around 28mph in both locations. Both signs are close to junctions where traffic slows to turn which obviously affects data. Top speeds recorded are also reducing with 55mph being the top speed recorded in the last two months for both locations, with one exception- 90mph recorded in Chestnut Ave at 9.45 am.

The daily average number of vehicles recorded is similar for both locations, between 2,000 and 3,000 vehicles a day in one direction, the assumption is that between 5,000 and 6,000 vehicles on average use both roads. However, there have been a few days with very high vehicles recorded in Halton Lane. The data also shows vehicles almost doubling when HS2 works close the A413 and road works close the roads around Halton. March and April show a large volume of traffic in Halton Lane including overnight when the A413 is closed for HS2.

Speeding % - In Chestnut Ave 30.8% of vehicles are speeding. In Halton Lane 26.2 % of vehicles are speeding.

In conclusion the MVAS appears to be helping to educate drivers and reduce speeds, although they are not the final solution, we've proved they have some effect on speeding, and we believe it's worth the investment to increase the number of signs. We will continue to submit bids to obtain funding for an additional mains operated MVAS to be placed in Chestnut Ave to free up the battery-operated sign to be moved around the village at accident hot spots.

We continue to have accidents in Halton Lane particularly the stretch from Perch Bridge to the tennis club exit. In 2022 we were made aware of eleven accidents, mainly cars in the ditch on the corner and a couple of cars coming together by Perch Bridge. In 2023 so far, we are aware of five accidents on this stretch. There have also been two accidents at the junction of Chestnut Ave and the Tring Road. We are working with the RAF to look at actions which might help to reduce accidents here.

Potholes continue to be a big problem and are reported to FixMyStreet on a regular basis, but it seems to be impossible to keep on top of them. The poor condition of pavements is also an issue which needs to be resolved.

Overweight HGVs continue to be a big problem at Perch Bridge. Reporting them to the police doesn't seem to bring any action. One of our volunteers stopped two overweight vehicles this year, 32t and 42t both carrying cargo which looked like construction supplies. The increase in

construction around the area appears to have caused an increase in overweight vehicles using Perch Bridge.

Due to Buckinghamshire Council changing contractors in April 2023 it became impossible in 2022 to progress with any grant applications as they wanted the new contractors to price projects. This has delayed considerably our progress with making the village safer.

We continue to work closely with our Local Area Technician from Buckinghamshire Council, to improve our roads, pavements and verges. This year we have managed to have the verges in Halton Lane cut back and the footpath sided out, making it safer for pedestrians.

We also finally gained agreement from Buckinghamshire Council to have the bridge in the centre of the village refurbished, as it has been in a poor state of repair for some years. In September 2022 the Bridges and Structures Team removed all the ivy and shrubs growing out of the stonework, filled gaps to stop water ingress then painted the bridge a lovely glossy black. It now looks very smart, so the flower troughs that originally decorated it have been re located to the front of the Village Hall, to enhance the car park and the entrance to the building.

The Council and the Community Board jointly funded Transport for Buckinghamshire to produce a Feasibility Study to improve the safety for pedestrians and motorists using Perch Bridge. We received the final report in May 2022, recommending traffic lights as the optimal safety solution for Perch Bridge. We have included this requirement in our Neighbourhood Plan and have passed the report to the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and the SPD Planning Team as funding will need to be found from Section 106 monies from the development of the Halton site.

The report also recommended improved HGV signage on the roads approaching Perch Bridge, we are currently looking for funding to take these proposals forward.

Communications

As part of the modernising process the Parish Council reviewed our branding and designed a new logo to represent our heritage, and our current and future identity. The new branding (at the beginning of this report) incorporates the five arrows of the British arm of the Rothschild family; the blue bridge; the canal that runs through the centre of our village; the woodland and nature (represented by the egret) that are distinctive features of our Parish and that gives it its sense of nature and place. We chose royal blue to represent our Royal Air Force heritage.

We reviewed our village newsletter to give it a fresher look, and we would like to thank our volunteer Paul Waddams for putting the newsletter together on a quarterly basis.

We produced a requirements document for a new website, but the work was put on hold until later in 2023 due to other priorities; in the interim our current website was given a data cleanse and update.

Environment

After securing a grant from the Community Board we held a wildflower planting day on October 16th to plant up several verges in the parish. Thank you to the volunteers from our Halton residents and from The Chiltern Society who all helped. In February a crab apple tree and some dogwoods were planted to commemorate the Queen as part of her Green Canopy project. We purchased a commemorative plaque from the Royal British Legion, to support our veterans.

On October 25th we attended a climate change conference that focused on practical local actions, and we hoped to create a Climate Action Group in the village, but after several appeals we understand that there is no appetite amongst our residents.

The Village Hall car park was accepted as a site by Buckinghamshire Council for an Electrical Vehicle Charging Point for use by our residents so we can encourage electric car ownership. We await the outcome of the site survey.

Planning

The Council succeeded in producing a draft Neighbourhood Plan, it went through a public consultation process that ended on 5 March 2023. An Open Day was held in the Village Hall on Saturday 21 January 2023, and we had a good turnout. Thank you to all the residents who came and gave us your feedback. We held a meeting with the DIO to discuss the draft plan enabling them to give us a formal response. This resulted in the Council voting on 22 March 2023 to go back to Buckinghamshire Council and apply for a new Neighbourhood Area that encompasses the whole of the Parish including the entirety of RAF Halton, (parts of which were outside of our original Neighbourhood area). When we receive the new neighbourhood area, we will review all our feedback, re draft the plan, and go through the public consultation exercise again.

Royal Air Force Halton support to the Parish Council

We continue to enjoy a positive relationship with our neighbours at RAF Halton and would like to thank the RAF for the support they have given us in the last year, and in particular Wg Cdr Jackie Wren who attends all our Parish Council Meetings and takes forward and resolves our concerns.

Members of the Parish Council and their partners enjoyed attending the RAF Halton Annual Reception on 13 July 2023. This was a good opportunity to meet Station personnel and other representatives from surrounding towns and villages. We enjoyed RAF hospitality which included a RAF Guard of Honour and a flypast by two Hercules aircraft.

The Station Commander RAF Halton continues to allow our residents access to the cricket pitch for rest and recreation when it is not in use by film crews.

Recruit Training Squadron continue to support the church by providing RAF Recruits to recover and renovate areas of the church yard. The teams of recruits have had a huge impact on the churchyard, making it more attractive and a safer place and by supplying the 'muscle' to the regular church volunteers.

The RAF are the backbone of our Remembrance Day Service, which was held in the churchyard on Sunday 13 November. Not only do they help organise the service, but Recruits attend smartly dressed in their uniforms, an RAF Band is also in attendance and Wg Cdr Wren lays a wreath on behalf of the RAF.

A big thank you to RAF Halton and especially to Sgt Paul Topping for building our replacement bus shelter. It is beautifully designed and built, and it will stand for another generation. Only the RAF could build a structure and then escort it from the airfield to the village. It took eleven Service personnel to lift and move it to its location. An impressive feat.

Closure of RAF Halton

The closure of RAF Halton and the development of around 1,000 homes will have a huge impact on our small Parish. This is main effort for the Council as it poses the greatest risks and

opportunities for our community. It is important that we work with Buckinghamshire Council and the DIO to ensure the best outcome for our Parish, Village and Community. Throughout the year we have been supported at many of the meetings and workshops by our Buckinghamshire Ward Councillor Richard Newcombe. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Richard for dedicating so much time to our cause and for giving us sound advice and support.

Throughout the year we have held meetings with the DIO, Station Commander RAF Halton, Halton Combined School, Halton Tennis Centre, The Halton Apprentice Association, Buckinghamshire Councillors, Member for Parliament Rob Butler, and with the Strategic Planning Development (SPD) Team for the RAF site. We have used these meetings to raise our concerns and to promote the HPC as a responsible potential owner of the sports fields and other green spaces including allotments. As the Vale of Aylesbury Plan includes the building of a new Community Centre for the Parish, the Council asked for the Nuffield Pavillion to be repurposed instead, as it will be in the new centre of the village, and it will enable us (along with the sports fields) to continue to run sporting events for the benefit of the local community.

HPC also attended three workshops organised by Buckinghamshire Council, to work on the Strategic Planning Document for the RAF site. This work will result in a Masterplan that will provide the overarching policies that future developers will be required to adhere to in their plans for the site. This was a very positive experience and at the last workshop on 29 March 2023, the SPD Team announced that ownership of the Nuffield sports pitches, the Nuffield Pavillion and its carpark will be transferred to the Parish Council on the closure of RAF Halton. The area where the current assault course sits will be developed into an allotment site and children's playpark, and ownership will also be transferred to the Parish Council. We are delighted that all our efforts have paid off, this is a great result for the village as we will retain our open green spaces, and sporting heritage, for the health and well-being of our residents and the wider community.

We continue to work with Buckinghamshire Council and the DIO to ensure the new development brings road safety benefits throughout the Parish, as traffic volumes will increase massively, and we need to ensure traffic calming measures are included to make our roads safe.

The DIO has put forward the rest of the Halton site including the airfield for development in the next Buckinghamshire Local Plan, so the disposal of RAF Halton will continue to keep the Parish Council busy and will remain our focus and main effort for some years to come.

Halton Parish Council

24 May 2023

Chair	Councillor J MacKinnon
Vice Chair	Councillor B Thompson
Village Hall	Councillor A Jimson
Village Hall Caretaker	Councillor J Hickey
Community Events	Councillor J Kumela
Highways	Councillor S Barber
Communications	Councillor C Booker
Environment	Councillor C Waddams
Parish Clerk	Fiona Richardson